IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Original) A digital certificate management system comprising:

a client and server system in which a digital certificate is used for authentication so as to establish communication between a server and a client, and data transmission is performed therebetween with the use of the communication established through the authentication; and

a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with the client and the server, and

wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus comprises a proof key updating unit which updates a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for authentication by the server;

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting the new proof key to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for the server, to the server, and

wherein:

said second transmitting unit performs operation of transmitting the new server certificate to the server after receiving, from the client, information indicating that the client has received the new proof key.

2. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 1, wherein:

said proof key updating unit in said digital certificate management apparatus comprises a unit configured to acquire a proof key certificate, which is a digital certificate, including the new proof key, for which validity can be proved with the use of an old proof key, and

wherein:

said first transmitting unit is configured to transmit the new proof key in a form of the proof key certificate to the client; and

said client comprises a unit configured to be responsive to the proof key included in the proof key certificate transmitted from said digital certificate management apparatus, for proving validity of the received proof key certificate with the use of the old proof key and storing the proof key included in the proof key certificate when determining that the proof key is a proper one.

3. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 1, wherein:

said proof key updating unit in the digital certificate management system comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a first proof key certificate, including the new proof key, which is a digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of an old proof key; and

a unit configured to acquire a second proof key certificate, including the new proof key, which is a digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of the new proof key, and

wherein:

said first transmitting unit is configured to transmit the new proof keys in respective forms of the first proof key certificate and the second proof key certificate to the client; and

said client comprises:

a unit configured to be responsive to the first proof key certificate transmitted from said digital certificate management apparatus, for proving validity of the received certificate with the use of the old proof key and storing the certificate when determining that it is a proper one; and

a unit configured to be responsive to the second proof key certificate from said digital certificate management apparatus, for proving validity of the received certificate with the use of the new proof key included in the first proof key certificate, and storing the second proof key certificate when determining that it is a proper one, and then deleting the old proof key certificate and the first proof key certificate, and

wherein:

the first transmitting unit in the digital certificate management apparatus is configured to perform operation of transmitting the second proof key certificate to the client at least after receiving information from the server indicating that the server has received the new server certificate.

4. (Currently Amended) A digital certificate management system comprising:

a client and server system in which a digital certificate is used for mutual authentication so as to establish communication between a server and a client, and data transmission is performed therebetween with the use of the communication established through the authentication; and

a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with the client and the server, and

wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus comprises a proof key updating unit which updates a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for the mutual authentication by the client and the server;

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for the client, and the new proof key, to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for the server, and the new proof key, to the server, and

wherein:

said second transmitting unit performs operation of transmitting the new server certificate to the server after receiving, from[,] the client, information indicating that the client has received the new proof key; and

said first transmitting unit performs operation of transmitting the new client certificate to the client after receiving information from the server indicating that the server has received the new proof key.

5. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 4, wherein:

said first transmitting unit is configured to transmit the new proof key at the same time ~~of~~ as or ~~in~~ prior to transmission of the new client certificate to the client; and

said second transmitting unit is configured to transmit the new proof key at the same time ~~of~~ as or ~~in~~ prior to transmission of the new server certificate to the server.

6. (Original) A digital certificate management system comprising:

a client and server system in which a digital certificate is used for mutual authentication so as to establish communication between a server and a client, and data transmission is performed therebetween with the use of the communication established through the authentication; and

a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with the client and the server, and

wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus comprises a proof key updating unit which updates a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for the mutual authentication by the client and the server;

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for the client, and the new proof key, to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for the server, and the new proof key, to the server, and

wherein:

said first transmitting unit performs operation of transmitting the new client certificate and the new proof key to the client at the same time; and

said second transmitting unit performs operation of transmitting the new server certificate and the new proof key to the server at the same time after receiving information from the client indicating that the client has received the new proof key.

7. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 1, wherein:

said server has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and the client;

said digital certificate management apparatus and the client perform data transmission mutually via the server; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or ~~the~~ a new client certificate to the client, transmitted from the first transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the client, via the communication established through authentication performed with the client with the use of an old digital certificate.

8. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 4, wherein:

said server has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and the client;

said digital certificate management apparatus and the client perform data transmission mutually via the server; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or the new client certificate to the client, transmitted from the first transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the client, via the communication established through authentication performed with the client with the use of an old digital certificate.

9. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 6, wherein:

said server has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and the client;

said digital certificate management apparatus and the client perform data transmission mutually via the server; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or the new client certificate to the client, transmitted from the first transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the client, via the communication established through authentication performed with the client with the use of an old digital certificate.

10. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 1, wherein:

said client has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and the server;

said digital certificate management apparatus and the server perform data transmission mutually via the client; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted from the second transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the server, via the communication established through authentication performed with the server with the use of an old digital certificate.

11. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 4, wherein:

said client has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and the server;

said digital certificate management apparatus and the server perform data transmission mutually via the client; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted from the second transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the server, via the communication established through authentication performed with the server with the use of an old digital certificate.

12. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 6, wherein:

said client has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and the server;

said digital certificate management apparatus and the server perform data transmission mutually via the client; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted from the second transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the server, via the communication established through authentication performed with the server with the use of an old digital certificate.

13. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 1, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

14. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 4, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

15. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 6, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

16. (Original) A digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with a client and a server which configure a client and server system, comprising:

a proof key updating unit which updates a proof key used for proving validity of a digital certificate used by the server for authentication through which communication between the client and the server is established, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting the new proof key to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for the server to the server, and

wherein:

said second transmitting unit performs operation of transmitting the new server certificate to the server after receiving, from the client, information indicating that the client has received the new proof key.

17. (Currently Amended) A digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with a client and a server which configure a client and server system, comprising:

a proof key updating unit which updates a proof key used for proving validity of a digital certificate used for mutual authentication through which communication is established between the client and the server, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for the client, and the new proof key, to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for the server, and the new proof key, to the server, and

wherein:

said second transmitting unit performs operation of transmitting the new server certificate to the server after receiving, from the client, information indicating that the client has received the new proof key; and

said first transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new client certificate to the client after receiving information from the server indicating that the server has received the new proof key.

18. (Original) A digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with a client and a server which configure a client and server system, comprising:

a proof key updating unit which updates a proof key used for proving validity of a digital certificate used for mutual authentication through which communication is established between the client and the server, and wherein:

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for the client, and the new proof key, to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for the server, and the new proof key, to the server, and

wherein:

said first transmitting unit performs operation of transmitting the new client certificate and the new proof key to the client at the same time; and

said second transmitting unit performs operation of transmitting the new server certificate and the new proof key to the server at the same time after receiving information from the client indicating that the client has received the new proof key.

19. (Currently Amended) A digital certificate management system comprising:

a client and server system in which one or a plurality of clients and one or a plurality of servers are included, authentication is performed between each client and each ~~sever~~ server with the use of a digital certificate, and data transmission is performed therebetween with communication established through the authentication; and

a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with each client and each server, and

wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus comprises:

a proof key updating unit updating a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for authentication by each server; and

an updating order control unit controlling a procedure of updating the proof key performed by the proof key updating unit based on information concerning respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting the new proof key to each client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, to the relevant server, and

wherein:

said updating order control unit controls the updating procedure so that said second transmitting unit performs operation of transmitting the new server certificate to the respective server after receiving from all the clients, which act as communication counterparts of the server, information indicating that the clients have received the new proof keys.

20. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 19, wherein:

said proof key updating unit in said digital certificate management apparatus comprises a unit configured to acquire a proof key certificate, including the new proof key, which is a digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of an old proof key, and

wherein:

said first transmitting unit is configured to transmit the new proof key in a form of the proof key certificate, to each client; and

each client comprises a unit configured to be responsive to the proof key certificate transmitted from said digital certificate management apparatus, for proving validity of the received proof key certificate with the use of the old proof key and storing the proof key included in the proof key certificate when determining that the proof key is a proper one.

21. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 19, wherein:

said proof key updating unit in the digital certificate management ~~system~~ apparatus comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a first proof key certificate, including the new proof key, which is a digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of an old proof key; and

a unit configured to acquire a second proof key certificate, including the new proof key, which is a digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of the new proof key, and

wherein:

said first transmitting unit is configured to transmit the new proof keys in respective forms of the first proof key certificate and the second proof key certificate to each client; and

each client comprises:

a unit configured to be responsive to the first proof key certificate transmitted from said digital certificate management apparatus, for proving validity of the received certificate with the use of the old proof key and storing the certificate when determining that it is a proper one; and

a unit configured to be responsive to the second proof key certificate transmitted from said digital certificate management apparatus, for proving validity of the received certificate with the use of the new proof key included in the first proof key certificate, and storing the second proof key certificate when determining that it is a proper one, and then deleting the old proof key certificate and the first proof key certificate, and

wherein:

the updating order control unit in the digital certificate management apparatus is configured to perform control such that the operation of transmitting the second proof key certificate to each client from the first transmitting unit is performed at least after receiving

information from all the servers which act as communication counterparts of the client indicating that the servers have received the new server certificates.

22. (Currently Amended) A digital certificate management system comprising:

a client and server system in which one or a plurality of clients and one or a plurality of servers are included, mutual authentication is performed between each client and each ~~sever~~ server with the use of a digital certificate, and data transmission is performed therebetween with communication established through the authentication; and

a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with each client and each server, and

wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus comprises:

a proof key updating unit which updates a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for the mutual authentication by each client and each server; and

an updating order control unit controlling a procedure of updating the proof key performed by the proof key updating unit based on information concerning the respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate, used for the mutual authentication, for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for each client, and the new proof key, to the relevant client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, and the new proof key, to the relevant server, and

wherein:

said updating order control unit controls the updating procedure so that said second transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new server certificate to each server after receiving, from all the clients which act as communication counterparts of the relevant server, information indicating that the relevant clients have received the new proof keys, and said first transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new client certificate to each client after receiving information, from all the servers which act as communication counterparts of the relevant client, indicating that the relevant servers have received the new proof keys.

23. (Currently Amended) A digital certificate management system comprising:

a client and server system in which one or a plurality of clients and one or a plurality of servers are included, mutual authentication is performed between each client and each ~~sever~~ server with the use of a digital certificate, and data transmission is performed therebetween with communication established through the authentication; and

a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with each client and each server, and

wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus comprises:

a proof key updating unit which updates a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for the mutual authentication by each client and each server; and

an updating order control unit controlling a procedure of updating the proof key performed by the proof key updating unit based on information concerning the respective

nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for each client, and the new proof key, to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, and the new proof key, to the server, and

wherein:

said updating order control unit controls the updating procedure so that said first transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new client certificate and the new proof key to each client at the same time, and said second transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new server certificate and the new proof key to each server at the same time after receiving information, from all the clients which act as communication counterparts of the relevant server, indicating that the clients have received the new proof keys.

24. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 19, wherein:

each server has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and at least one of the clients;

said digital certificate management apparatus and each of said at least one client perform data transmission mutually via any of the servers; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or ~~the~~ a new client certificate to the client, transmitted from the first transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the client, via the communication established through authentication performed with the client, which is a transmission destination, with the use of an old digital certificate.

25. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 22, wherein:

each server has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and at least one of the clients;

said digital certificate management apparatus and each of said at least one client perform data transmission mutually via any of the servers; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or the new client certificate to the client, transmitted from the first transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the client, via the communication established through authentication performed with the client, which is a transmission destination, with the use of an old digital certificate.

26. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 23, wherein:

each server has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and at least one of the clients;

said digital certificate management apparatus and each of said at least one client perform data transmission mutually via any of the servers; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or the new client certificate to the client, transmitted from the first transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the client, via the communication established through authentication performed with the client, which is a transmission destination, with the use of an old digital certificate.

27. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 19, wherein:

each client has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and at least one of the servers;

said digital certificate management apparatus and each of said at least one server perform data transmission mutually via any of the clients; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted from the second transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the server, via the communication established through authentication performed with the server, which is a transmission destination, with the use of an old digital certificate.

28. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 22, wherein:

each client has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and at least one of the servers;

said digital certificate management apparatus and each of said at least one server perform data transmission mutually via any of the clients; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted from the second transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus

for the server, via the communication established through authentication performed with the server, which is a transmission destination, with the use of an old digital certificate.

29. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 23, wherein:

each client has an intermediary function for communication between the digital certificate management apparatus and at least one of the servers;

said digital certificate management apparatus and each of said at least one server perform data transmission mutually via any of the clients; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted from the second transmitting unit of the digital certificate management apparatus for the server, via the communication established through authentication performed with the server[.], which is a transmission destination, with the use of an old digital certificate.

30. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 19, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

31. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 22, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

32. (Original) The digital certificate management system as claimed in claim 23, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

33. (Currently Amended) A digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with one or a plurality of clients and one or a plurality of servers which configure a client and server system, comprising:

a proof key updating unit updating a proof key used for proving validity of a digital certificate used for authentication by the server, whereby communication is established between each client and each server; and

an updating order control unit controlling a procedure of updating the proof key performed by the proof key updating unit based on information concerning the respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting the new proof key to each client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, to the relevant server, and

wherein:

said updating order control unit controls the updating procedure so that said second transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new server certificate to the respective server after receiving from all the clients, which act as communication counterparts of the server, information indicating that the clients have received the new proof keys.

34. (Original) A digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with one or a plurality of clients and one or a plurality of servers which configure a client and server system, comprising:

a proof key updating unit updating a proof key used for proving validity of a digital certificate used for mutual authentication, whereby communication is established between each client and each server; and

an updating order control unit controlling a procedure of updating the proof key performed by the proof key updating unit based on information concerning the respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate, used for the mutual authentication, for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for each client, and the new proof key, to the relevant client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, and the new proof key, to the relevant server, and

wherein:

said updating order control unit controls the updating procedure so that said second transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new server certificate to each server after receiving, from all the clients which act as communication counterparts of the relevant server, information indicating that the relevant clients have received the new proof keys, and said first transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new client certificate to each client after receiving information, from all the servers which act as communication counterparts of the relevant client, indicating that the relevant servers have received the new proof keys.

35. (Original) A digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with one or a plurality of clients and one or a plurality of servers which configure a client and server system, comprising:

a proof key updating unit updating a proof key used for proving validity of a digital certificate used for mutual authentication, whereby communication is established between each client and each server; and

an updating order control unit controlling a procedure of updating the proof key performed by the proof key updating unit based on information concerning the respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for each client, and the new proof key, to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, and the new proof key, to the server, and

wherein:

said updating order control unit controls the updating procedure so that said first transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new client certificate and the new proof key to each client at the same time, and said second transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new server certificate and the new proof key to each server at the same time after receiving information, from all the clients which act as communication counterparts of the relevant server, indicating that the clients have received the new proof keys.

36. (Original) A digital certificate management method for managing, in a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with a server and a client which configure a client and server system, a digital certificate used for authentication whereby communication is established between the server and the client, comprising the steps of:

a) updating a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for authentication by the server, and

wherein said step a) comprises the steps of:

a-1) acquiring a new proof key for updating; and

a-2) acquiring a new digital certificate used for the authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

b-1) transmitting the new proof key to the client; and

b-2) transmitting a new server certificate which is a new digital certificate for the server, to the server, after receiving, from the client,

information indicating that the client has received the new proof key.

37. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 36, wherein:

said step a) further comprises the step of a-3) acquiring a proof key certificate, which is the digital certificate, including the new proof key, for which validity can be proved with the use of an old proof key;

said step b-1) further comprises the step of b-3) transmitting the new proof key in a form of the proof key certificate to the client; and

when the proof key certificate is transmitted to the client, the client is caused to prove validity of the received proof key certificate with the use of the old proof key and store the proof key included in the proof key certificate when determining that the proof key is a proper one.

38. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 36, wherein:

said step a) further comprises the steps of:

a-4) acquiring a first proof key certificate, including the new proof key, which is the digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of an old proof key certificate; and

a-5) acquiring a second proof key certificate, including the new proof key, which is a digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of the new proof key, and

wherein:

said step b-1) comprises the step of transmitting the new proof keys in respective forms of the first proof key certificate and the second proof key certificate to the client;

after the completion of said step b-2), the second proof key certificate is transmitted to the client at least after information indicating that the server has received the new server certificate is received;

the client is caused to prove validity of the received certificate with the use of the old proof key upon receiving the first proof key certificate, and to store the certificate when determining that it is a proper one; and

the client is caused to prove validity of the received certificate with the use of the new proof key included in the first proof key certificate when receiving the second proof key certificate, and to store the second proof key certificate when determining that it is a proper one, and then delete the old proof key certificate and the first proof key certificate.

39. (Original) A digital certificate management method for managing, in a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with a server and a client which configure a client and server system, a digital certificate used for mutual authentication whereby communication is established between the server and the client, comprising the steps of:

a) updating a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for the mutual authentication by the client and the server, and

wherein:

said step a) comprises the steps of;

a-1) acquiring a new proof key for updating; and

a-2) acquiring a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

b-1) transmitting the new proof key to the server;

b-2) transmitting the new proof key to the client;

b-3) transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for the client, to the client; and

b-4) transmitting a new server certificate

which is the new digital certificate for the server, to the server; and

wherein:

said steps a-1), a-2), b-1), b-2), b-3) and b-4) are executed in a predetermined order; and

said step b-4) is performed after the completion of said step b-2) and also after information indicating that the client has received the new proof key from the client is received from the client, and also, said step b-3) is performed after the completion of said step b-1) and also after information indicating that the server has received the new proof key is received from the server.

40. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 39, wherein:

said step b-3) is performed at the same time or after the completion of said step b-2), and also, said step b-4) is performed at the same time or after the completion of said step b-1).

41. (Currently Amended) A digital certificate management method for managing, in a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with a server and a client which configure a client and server system, a digital certificate used for mutual authentication

whereby communication is established between the server and the client, comprising the steps of:

a) updating a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for the mutual authentication by the client and the server, and

wherein:

said step a) comprises the steps of[;]:

a-1) acquiring a new proof key for updating;

a-2) acquiring a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

b-1) transmitting the new proof key to the server;

b-2) transmitting the new proof key to the client;

b-3) transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for the client, to the client; and

b-4) transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for the server, to the server, and

wherein:

said steps a-1), a-2), b-1), b-2), b-3) and b-4) are executed in a predetermined order; and

said steps b-2) and b-3) are performed together, and then, after the completion of these steps and after information indicating that the client has received the new proof key, said steps b-1) and b-4) are performed together.

42. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 36, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and the client perform data transmission mutually via the server; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or ~~the~~ a new client certificate to the client, transmitted in said step b-2) and/or said ~~step b-3)~~ step b-1) from the digital certificate management apparatus for the client, via the communication established through authentication performed with the client with the use of an old digital certificate.

43. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 39, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and the client perform data transmission mutually via the server; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or the new client certificate to the client, transmitted in said step b-2) and/or said step b-3) from the digital certificate management apparatus for the client, via the communication established through authentication performed with the client with the use of an old digital certificate.

44. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 41, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and the client perform data transmission mutually via the server; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or the new client certificate to the client, transmitted in said step b-2) and/or said step b-3) from the digital certificate management apparatus for the client, via the communication established through authentication performed with the client with the use of an old digital certificate.

45. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 36, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and the server perform data transmission mutually via the client; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted in said step b-1) and/or said ~~step b-4)~~ step b-2) from the digital certificate management apparatus for the server, via the communication established through authentication performed with the server with the use of an old digital certificate.

46. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 39, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and the server perform data transmission mutually via the client; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted in said step b-1) and/or said step b-4) from the digital certificate management apparatus for the server, via the communication established through authentication performed with the server with the use of an old digital certificate.

47. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 41, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and the server perform data transmission mutually via the client; and

~~and~~ the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted in said step b-1) and/or said step b-4) from the digital certificate

management apparatus for the server, via the communication established through authentication performed with the server with the use of an old digital certificate.

48. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 36, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

49. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 39, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

50. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 41, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

51. (Original) A digital certificate management method for managing, in a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with one or a plurality of servers and one or a plurality of clients which configure a client and server system, a digital certificate used

for mutual authentication whereby communication is established between the one or the plurality of servers and the one or the plurality of clients, comprising the steps of:

a) updating a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for authentication, based on an updating procedure determined according to information concerning the respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said step a) comprising the steps of:

a-1) acquiring a new proof key for updating;

a-2) acquiring a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a-3) transmitting the new proof key to each client; and

a-4) transmitting a new server certificate which is a new digital certificate for each server, to the server, and

wherein:

said updating procedure is configured so that said step a-4) is performed after information indicating that the new proof keys have been received is received from all the clients, which act as communication counterparts of the relevant server.

52. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 51, wherein:

said step a) further comprises the steps of a-5) acquiring a proof key certificate, including the new proof key, which is the digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of an old proof key, and

wherein:

said step a-3) comprises the step of transmitting the new proof key in a form of the proof key certificate to the client; and

the client is caused to prove validity of the received proof key certificate with the use of the old proof key when receiving the proof key certificate, and to store the proof key included in the proof key certificate when determining that the proof key is a proper one.

53. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 51, wherein:

said step a) further comprises the ~~step~~ steps of:

a-6) acquiring a first proof key certificate, including the new proof key, which is the digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of an old proof key certificate; and

a-7) acquiring a second proof key certificate, including the new proof key, which is the digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of the new proof key, and

wherein:

said step a-3) comprises the step of transmitting the new proof keys in respective forms of the first proof key certificate and the second proof key certificate to each client;

said step ~~a)~~ a-3) is configured so that the operation of transmitting the second proof key certificate to each client is performed at least after information is received from all the servers, which act as communication counterparts of the client, indicating that the servers have received the new server certificate;

each client is caused to be responsive to the first proof key certificate received from said digital certificate management apparatus, for proving validity of the received certificate

with the use of the old proof key and storing the certificate when determining that it is a proper one; and

each client is caused to be responsive to the second proof key certificate received from said digital certificate management apparatus for proving validity of the received certificate with the use of the new proof key included in the first proof key certificate and storing the second proof key certificate when determining that it is a proper one, and then to delete the old proof key certificate and the first proof key certificate.

54. (Currently Amended) A digital certificate management method for managing, in a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with one or a plurality of servers and one or a plurality of clients which configure a client and server system, a digital certificate used for mutual authentication whereby communication is established between the one or the plurality of servers and the one or the plurality of clients, comprising the step of:

a) updating a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for the mutual authentication based on an updating procedure determined according to information concerning the respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said step a) comprises:

a-1) acquiring a new proof key for updating;

a-2) ~~acquitting~~ acquiring a new digital certificate, used for the mutual authentication, for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a-3) transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for each client, and the new proof key, to the relevant client; and

a-4) transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, and the new proof key, to the relevant server, and

wherein:

said updating procedure is configured so that said step a-4) is performed after information indicating that the relevant clients have received the new proof keys is received from all the clients which act as communication counterparts of the relevant server, and said step a-3) is performed after information indicating that the relevant servers have received the new proof keys is received from all the servers which act as communication counterparts of the relevant client.

55. (Currently Amended) A digital certificate management method for managing, in a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with one or a plurality of servers and one or a plurality of clients which configure a client and server system, a digital certificate used for mutual authentication whereby communication is established between the one or the plurality of servers and the one or the plurality of clients, comprising the step of:

a) updating a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for the mutual authentication based on an updating procedure determined according to information concerning the respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said step a) comprises the steps of:

a-1) acquiring a new proof key for updating;

a-2) acquiring a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a-3) transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for each client, and the new proof key, to the client; and

a-4) transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, and the new proof key, to the server[,]; and

wherein said updating procedure is configured so that operations of transmitting the new client certificate and the new proof key to each client are performed at the same time, and operations of transmitting the new server certificate and the new proof key to each server are performed at the same time after information indicating that the clients have received the new proof keys is received from all the clients which act as communication counterparts of the relevant server.

56. (Currently Amended) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 51, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and each client perform data transmission mutually via any of the servers; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or ~~the~~ a new client certificate to the client, transmitted from the digital certificate management apparatus for the client in said step a-3), via the communication established through authentication performed with the client which is a transmission destination with the use of an old digital certificate.

57. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 54, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and each client perform data transmission mutually via any of the servers; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or the new client certificate to the client, transmitted from the digital certificate management apparatus for the client in said step a-3), via the communication established through authentication performed with the client which is a transmission destination with the use of an old digital certificate.

58. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 55, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and each client perform data transmission mutually via any of the servers; and

the server transmits the new proof key and/or the new client certificate to the client, transmitted from the digital certificate management apparatus for the client in said step a-3), via the communication established through authentication performed with the client which is a transmission destination with the use of an old digital certificate.

59. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 51, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and each server perform data transmission mutually via any of the clients; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted from the digital certificate management apparatus for the server in said step a-4), via the communication established through authentication performed with the server which is a transmission destination with the use of an old digital certificate.

60. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 54, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and each server perform data transmission mutually via any of the clients; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted from the digital certificate management apparatus for the server in said step a-4), via the communication established through authentication performed with the server which is a transmission destination with the use of an old digital certificate.

61. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 55, wherein:

said digital certificate management apparatus and each server perform data transmission mutually via any of the clients; and

the client transmits the new proof key and/or the new server certificate to the server, transmitted from the digital certificate management apparatus for the server in said step a-4), via the communication established through authentication performed with the server which is a transmission destination with the use of an old digital certificate.

62. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 51, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

63. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 54, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

64. (Original) The digital certificate management method as claimed in claim 55, wherein:

the authentication performed between the client and the server comprises authentication according to an SSL or TLS protocol; and

the server certificate comprises a public key certificate for the server.

65. (Original) An updating procedure determining method for determining an updating procedure to be stored in one or a plurality of clients and one or a plurality of servers which configure a client and server system, for updating by a digital certificate management apparatus a proof key used for proving validity of a digital certificate used for authentication, through which communication is established between the one or the plurality of clients and the one or the plurality of servers, comprising the step of:

determining the updating procedure based on information concerning the respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server,

so that a step of transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for which validity can be proved with the use of a new proof key for updating, used for the authentication by the server, is performed after information indicating that all the clients which act as communication counterparts of the server is received from the clients.

Claims 66-71 (Canceled)

72. (Currently Amended) A computer readable information recording medium storing therein a ~~the~~ program ~~claimed in claim 66~~ for causing a computer, which controls a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with a client and a server which configure a client and server system, to perform a proof key updating step of updating a proof key used for providing validity of a digital certificate used by the server for authentication performed when communication is established between the client and the server, said program being configured to cause the computer to function as:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting the new proof key to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for the server, to the server, and

wherein:

said second transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new server certificate to the server after receiving from the client information indicating that the client has received the new proof key.

73. (Currently Amended) A computer readable information recoding medium storing therein a ~~the~~ program ~~claimed in claim 67~~ for causing a computer, which controls a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with a client and a server which configure a client and server system, to perform a proof key updating step of updating a proof key used for providing validity of a digital certificate used for authentication performed when

communication is established between the client and the server, said program being configured to cause the computer to function as:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for the client, and the new proof key, to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for the server, and the new proof key, to the server, and

wherein:

said second transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new server certificate to the server after receiving from the client information indicating that the client has received the new proof key; and

said first transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new client certificate to the client after receiving information from the server indicating that the server has received the new proof key.

74. (Currently Amended) A computer readable information recording medium storing ~~the~~ a program ~~claimed in claim 68~~ for causing a computer, which controls a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with a client and a server which configure a client and server system, to perform a proof key updating step of updating a proof key used for proving validity of a digital certificate used for authentication performed when communication is established between the client and the server, said program being configured to cause the computer to function as:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for the client, and the new proof key, to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for the server, and the new proof key, to the server, and

wherein:

said first transmitting unit has a function of performing the operation of transmitting the new client certificate and the new proof key to the client at the same time; and

said second transmitting unit has a function of performing the operation of transmitting the new server certificate and the new proof key to the server at the same time after receiving information from the client indicating that the client has received the new proof key.

75. (Currently Amended) A computer readable information recording medium storing therein ~~the~~ a program ~~claimed in claim 69~~ for causing a computer, which controls a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with one of a plurality of clients and one or a plurality of servers which configure a client and server system, to function as:

a proof key updating unit updating a proof key used for proving validity of a digital certificate used for authentication by each server for establishing communication between each server and each client; and

an updating order control unit controlling a procedure of updating the proof key performed by the proof key updating unit based on information concerning the respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit comprises:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting the new proof key to each client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, to the relevant server, and

wherein:

said updating order control unit controls the updating procedure so that said second transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new server certificate to the respective server after receiving from all the clients, which act as communication counterparts of the server, information indicating that the clients have received the new proof keys.

76. (Currently Amended) A computer readable information recording medium storing therein ~~the~~ a program ~~claimed in claim 70~~ for causing a computer, which controls a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with one of a plurality of clients and one or a plurality of servers which configure a client and server system, to function as:

a proof key updating unit updating a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for mutual authentication for establishing communication between each server and each client; and

an updating order control unit controlling a procedure of updating the proof key performed by the proof key updating unit based on information concerning the respective

nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit has the functions of:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate, used for the mutual authentication, for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for each client, and the new proof key, to the relevant client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, and the new proof key, to the relevant server, and

wherein:

said updating order control unit is configured to control the updating procedure so that said second transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new server certificate to each server after receiving, from all the clients which act as communication counterparts of the relevant server, information indicating that the relevant clients have received the new proof keys, and said first transmitting unit performs the operation of transmitting the new client certificate to each client after receiving information, from all the servers which act as communication counterparts of the relevant client, indicating that the relevant servers have received the new proof keys.

77. (Currently Amended) A computer readable information recording medium storing therein ~~the~~ a program ~~claimed in claim 77~~ for causing a computer, which controls a digital certificate management apparatus communicatable with one of a plurality of clients and one or a plurality of servers which configure a client and server system, to function as:

a proof key updating unit updating a proof key used for proving validity of the digital certificate used for mutual authentication for establishing communication between each server and each client; and

an updating order control unit controlling a procedure of updating the proof key performed by the proof key updating unit based on information concerning the respective nodes included in the client and server system as to a communication counterpart of each node and as to whether each of the node and the counterpart acts as a client or a server, and

wherein:

said proof key updating unit has the functions of:

a unit configured to acquire a new proof key for updating;

a unit configured to acquire a new digital certificate used for the mutual authentication for which validity can be proved with the use of said new proof key;

a first transmitting unit transmitting a new client certificate which is the new digital certificate for each client, and the new proof key, to the client; and

a second transmitting unit transmitting a new server certificate which is the new digital certificate for each server, and the new proof key, to the server,

and

wherein:

said updating order control unit is configured to control the updating procedure so that said first transmitting unit performs the operations of transmitting the new client certificate and the new proof key to each client at the same time, and said second transmitting unit performs the operations of transmitting the new server certificate and the new proof key to each server at the same time after receiving information, from all the clients which act as communication counterparts of the relevant server, indicating that the clients have received the new proof keys.